

A Love Lost Before It Started by The Emcee

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Disclaimer: I don't own any of the characters or the fandom.

A/N: 'It' is ruling my life right now. I just can't get over how awesome it is. Anyway, I really liked the interaction between Henry and Bill at the beginning of the film, where Henry tells Bill that he had a free pass due to his brother. That struck as both honorable and odd; I never thought Henry Bowers would be the kind of person to do something like that. And because my mind is a dark, demented, twisted, and frightening place, I felt compelled to write a fic about them. Feel free to leave a comment in the towel section down below and enjoy!

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A Love Lost Before It Started

~...~

Bill didn't want to go to school today, but his father made him. How in the hell was he supposed to focus on his classes and homework when Georgie was missing? All Bill could think of on his way to school was his brother. Over the past few days since Georgie went missing, the police, his parents, Bill himself, and anyone who could be bothered to help them out had searched the town, the surrounding areas, and were still searching now, but there were plenty of other places to look. Like the Barrens. Bill was adamant that the Barrens were the key. For whatever reason, he was drawn there. He needed to check it out.

According to his father, however, all Bill needed to do was go to school and try to live a normal life again.

How could Bill do that when Georgie wasn't here anymore? He hadn't been able to sleep properly since his brother went missing, and he only ate because he was told to. And now, he was going to school instead of helping in the search. Bill hated that he had to go, but he went anyway. If he didn't, his parents would kill him and that wouldn't be productive in the search for Georgie. Maybe Bill could help after school and on weekends.

"Hey, Bill," both Eddie and Richie greeted, looking surprised that Bill had shown up.

"My p-p-parents made me come," Bill explained right away, knowing that they'd ask why he was there.

"Well, the police are looking for him, right? I'm sure they'll find him soon," Eddie said.

"Yeah. What else can you do?" Richie asked.

"Help them look. There are plenty of places to check," Bill told them as they walked into school.

"Like where?" Eddie asked.

"The woods, the Barrens," said Bill. "Nearby towns."

"You really think Georgie could've made it out of town by himself?" Richie said. "If he was taken, finding him will be difficult."

"We have to try," Bill said, feeling more determined than ever to aid in the search. And the fact that Eddie and Richie didn't contradict his use of 'we' made him feel somewhat better.

Suddenly, Bill was pulled away from his friends and pushed roughly against the lockers in the hallway. Looking up, he saw that Henry Bowers and his gang were surrounding him. Henry was glaring down at him, a frown deep on his face, while his friends formed a sort of barrier around them, keeping Eddie and Richie at bay.

"Let him go, Bowers!" Richie shouted loudly, trying to reach for Bill.

"Bill's suffering enough. He doesn't need your crap on top of it," Eddie added.

"Shut up," Henry snapped at them. Richie and Eddie cowered back slightly, but they still looked like they would interfere if Henry tried anything. Paying them no mind, Henry turned to Bill, who was looking up at him with wide blue eyes.

"I wanted to tell you that you've got a free pass, Denbrough," Henry told him, his eyes boring into Bill's.

"Wuh-wuh-wuh-what d-do you mean?" Bill asked. He was preparing himself for the hit that was sure to come. Like everyone else, he knew that Henry Bowers and his gang were no good.

"Are you deaf? I said that you've got a free pass. For the rest of the school year," Henry growled. "Because of your brother. Aren't you supposed to be smart, Denbrough?" He sneered down at Bill.

Looking over Henry's shoulder, he locked his gaze with Eddie, Richie, and now Stan, who had just shown up. Bill wanted to tell Henry that Stan was the smartest in his little group of friends, but antagonizing the older boy was never a good idea. And right now, Bill needed to survive. Georgie needed him to.

"Oh," was all Bill could think of to say. Henry released him and he landed gently on the ground.

"You're welcome," Henry said with a humorless smirk. He and his friends walked away, making snide remarks at Bill's friends as they did so.

"Are you okay, Bill?" Stan asked him, worry evident on his face. All of his friends were worried about him, especially now that Bill was clearly on Henry's radar.

"I heard him say that he was giving you a free pass. What did that mean?" Richie asked.

"It's because of Georgie," Bill answered. "And I'm f-f-fine."

For the rest of the day, all Bill could think about, aside from Georgie of course, was Henry Bowers and his words. To his knowledge, Henry had never given anyone a free pass, ever. Bill wasn't buying that Henry was doing so because of Georgie going missing; plenty of kids had had bad things happen to them and Henry still tormented them all the same. So why Bill? What ulterior motives did he have?

Bill wanted to find out, but Georgie came first.

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Sighing heavily, Bill stumbled into the bathroom and towards the big stall at the end. Closing and locking the door, he sat down on the toilet and tried not his best not to cry. His parents had told him last night that the search for Georgie was being called off. Other children had gone missing and they needed to apply their efforts elsewhere. When Bill began to protest, his father, with tired, sad eyes and gritted teeth, told him that the likelihood of Georgie still being alive was slim.

Just like that, his parents and the police were giving up on Georgie. If anything, Bill thought that the police's efforts should be redoubled since even more kids had gone missing. Maybe they were connected somehow. Surely the police would've been able to find out that much, right? So why were they giving up on Georgie? Just like that, Georgie was put on the backburner.

It wasn't fair!

Why Georgie? What did he do to deserve this? Didn't anyone care about him anymore?

Well, if his parents and the police weren't going to do anything, Bill would. He'd look for Georgie. Him and Eddie and Richie and Stan. They'd search in the Barrens, where no one had checked, and they'd continue searching until they found something, anything that might lead them to Georgie.

Bill was certain that if he talked to Eddie, Richie, and Stan that they'd be more than willing to help him out. They were his best friends after all; they always had his back when he needed it. And they had all

cared for Georgie too, so why wouldn't they help? Maybe they'd even think of places to look that Bill hadn't.

The door to the boys' bathroom opened and Bill stiffened. He silenced his soft sobs and pulled his legs up onto the toilet set. With trembling lips and eyes still puffy from crying, Bill listened, waiting for whoever had entered to get their business done and over with and leave. He heard the facet turn on and water rushing into whichever sink the unknown boy was at.

"Shit," a voice whispered softly and Bill's blood ran cold. He knew that voice. It was Henry Bowers.

"Fucking... God damn it, Dad," Henry mumbled, so softly that Bill had to strain to hear him over the running water. He heard Henry splash his face a few times and tear off a piece of paper towel. It sounded like he was wetting it and cleaning something up.

Bill knew that Henry's dad was a major asshole. He didn't know exact details, but people talked. Henry only had his dad, but from what Bill had heard, he would've been better off without him. It wasn't like Henry could do anything about the bruises and scratches that would show up on his face and arms every so often. For the first time in his life, Bill was actually feeling sorry for Henry Bowers. Judging by the hisses and gasps of pain Henry would spout while he did whatever he was doing, Bill wasn't the only one who was suffering at the moment.

Minutes passed and it was clear to Bill that Henry wasn't going anywhere anytime soon. Classes would be starting in a few minutes and Bill needed to get going. Wiping his eyes and his nose with a wad of toilet paper, Bill picked up his bag and left his stall. Cautiously, he walked towards the door and he watched as Henry froze up, his eyes widening in surprise before narrowing slightly.

"S-s-sorry, B-Bowers," Bill muttered, shifting his book bag slightly. He saw that Henry's lip was cut and bleeding and that there was a bruise around his right eye. So that's what Henry had been cleaning up: his face.

"Just...get out of here, Denbrough," Henry said, starting off angry and then ending in a defeated sigh.

"Th-thanks," Bill muttered softly. Before he opened the bathroom door, he turned to meet Henry's gaze in the mirror, the older boy's eyes having followed Bill's every movement since appearing.

"What?" Henry snapped at him.

"I just w-wanted to say... I'm sorry," Bill told him sincerely. "About your d-dad being a jerk."

Henry didn't say anything. He just stared at Bill until the younger boy cleared his throat and left the bathroom. Bill doubted that that could've been any more awkward than it was. The bell rang just as Bill sat down in his seat and he couldn't explain to Eddie, Richie, or Stan where he had been that morning. As he was pulling out his folder for class, Bill cursed inwardly and leaned back in his seat.

He had left his coat in the bathroom.

It was cold as hell and windy; he needed that coat. Well, he couldn't go and get it now. Maybe, if he was really lucky, it'd still be there when he had the chance to go and look. For now, however, he had to get through morning announcements and class before he could do so.

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Bill was sitting at lunch, listening to Richie and Eddie arguing while Stan would occasionally interject. His coat was gone when he went to look for it and he was mentally kicking himself. Without his coat, he would probably get sick and that would mean that he wouldn't be able to look for Georgie. The snow that had fallen over the past weeks had already made that difficult as it was; being sick would delay his progress even further.

A shadow fell upon him and the conversation ceased. Bill looked up and saw Henry looming over him, his buddies behind him. Belch and Vic were glaring at them coolly while Patrick was giving them all a lecherous grin that caused Bill to shiver. His eyes returned to Henry, whose expression was unreadable.

"I think this is yours, B-B-Bill," Henry sneered down at him as he tossed Bill's coat down at him.

"What did you do to his coat, Bowers?" Richie demanded.

"I didn't do anything, motor mouth. I found it," Henry growled at him. That was enough to cause Richie to stand down.

"Where'd you find it? And why are you returning it?" Eddie questioned him, his eyes narrowed in suspicion.

"The bathroom, pipsqueak," Henry scowled. "Bill knows why I'm returning it, don't you, B-B-Billy boy?" His eyes met Bill's and in that moment an understanding passed between them.

Henry wasn't returning Bill's coat because he was off the hook for the rest of the year. In Henry's eyes were full of animosity, but there was also a tiny spark of gratitude and even sympathy in them. Was Bill just seeing things? Was Henry Bowers even capable of feeling grateful and being sympathetic? Bill clutched his jacket to his chest and stared up at Henry.

"Th-th-thanks," said Bill. All Henry did was nod at him before turning to Richie. He reached down and ran his finger through Richie's applesauce, coating it graciously before he spread it across the lenses of Richie's glasses.

"Smell ya later," said Henry with a smirk. Belch and Vic chuckled as they followed Henry. Patrick licked his lips at them before he, too, left them behind.

"Those guys are assholes," Eddie said plainly.

"You said it," Stan mumbled softly.

"Those dickheads probably can't find their dicks. That's how small they are," Richie grumbled as he removed his glasses and cleaned them off.

As his friends continued to talk, Bill merely set his coat on the chair beside them and returned to his tray. Occasionally, he would join in on the conversation, which eventually deviated from Henry Bowers and his gang to other, more pleasant things. Yet his mind couldn't stop thinking of Henry.

Why now was he preoccupied with the boy who had made his life hell while he was at school and even sometimes outside of it? Bill had other things to worry about, but Henry kept creeping into his thoughts. Henry wasn't acting like himself, not when it came to Bill anyway. There was nothing nice about Henry, but he was treating Bill so differently than he had ever treated anyone. It was strange to say the least and Bill wanted to know why.

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Bill kicked a rock into the stream, swearing and screaming internally. Winter had passed and the snow was almost gone. Spring would arrive soon and after that it would be summer vacation. Not that Bill really cared about any of that anyway.

The police had given up on Georgie, and so had his parents. It was like Georgie had never existed. His mom and dad never talked about him, never entered his room, and hadn't even been upset when the police told them that, in light of the recent disappearances of other children in town, Georgie was no longer a priority. To Bill, it seemed as though his parents and the police were forgetting that Georgie was missing, that he was important.

Was Bill the only one who cared about him anymore?

Bill hated being at home anymore. Going home felt more like hell than anything else he had ever experienced. His mother only played the piano whenever she had a student over. His father delved into work and his projects whenever he was at home. They weren't themselves, but they weren't doing anything to find Georgie either. It was like they had given up.

But why would they do that? Georgie was their son. Didn't they care about him? Shouldn't they be upset? Wasn't it a parent's job to care about their children and to stop at nothing to make sure they were safe and sound? Why didn't they care about Georgie anymore?

Bill just didn't understand them or the police. That was why he was at the Barrens alone. He needed to get out of the house. Staying there was too much more him. It felt like he was slowly suffocating in his own home. Was it even home now that Georgie was gone? To Bill, it

didn't feel like home.

He kicked another rock as hard as he could. Richie, Eddie, and Stan should be on their way to the Barrens right now. When they'd arrive, Bill would be able to breathe a little easier. Even though they didn't understand what he was going through, they still stood by him and supported him relentlessly. They helped to take his mind off of everything.

Bill heard the shuffling of footsteps and looked up, expecting to see his friends. Instead, he saw Henry Bowers, looking like he had seen better days. There were a few bruises visible on his bare arms and his nose was bloody. He was panting, almost like he had just been running. When he saw Bill, he stumbled to a stop.

"What are you doing here?!" Henry barked at him in anger. Though he sounded angry, he looked terrified.

"W-waiting for my fr-friends," Bill replied. He took a step towards Henry, who in turn took a step back.

That made Bill stop. Henry Bowers never retreated from the likes of Bill. Hell, Henry Bowers didn't retreat from anybody. At least, not to Bill's knowledge. Yet, he just had and that made Bill feel bad for the older boy.

"Are you o-o-okay?" Bill asked him. Henry glowered at him, obviously trying to act tough and, in Bill's opinion, trying not to cry.

"Does it look like I'm okay?" Henry snapped at him.

"No," said Bill, swallowing thickly. Even though he had been told that he got a free pass for the school year, Henry Bowers still intimidated him.

They stood there and stared at each other for what felt like an eternity to Bill. Henry was panting and he was probably freezing his ass off. At least Bill had a jacket on. And he looked like he was in pain. Bending down, Bill opened his bag and pulled a bottle of water out from it. Slowly, he approached Henry and offered the bottle. Henry narrowed his eyes at it before turning to Bill.

"What's that?" Henry asked him.

"The wuh-wuh-water around here isn't cl-clean. You sh-sh-sh-should pro-probably clean your n-nose," Bill explained. With slightly hesitation, Henry accepted the bottle of water. From his jacket pocket, Bill pulled out a packet of tissues that Eddie had given him a few days prior when Bill had sneezed in front of him. "H-here."

Henry took the tissues as well. With both of his hands occupied, Henry couldn't do anything to harm Bill now. Though it didn't seem as if Henry was even thinking about doing so. As a matter of fact, he looked a bit stunned and confused.

"Why are you being nice to me?" Henry asked, his voice sounding demanding and defensive. "I've never been nice to you."

"I...I don't know wh-why," Bill admitted softly. "I just... I feel like we-we're in the s-s-same b-b-b-boat."

"What do you mean?" said Henry.

"You're d-d-dad is an asshole. And my b-b-brother is gone," was all Bill said.

In a way, they were both suffering. Henry had to endure the abuse of his dad, who was a police officer. If anything, his dad should be locking people like that away instead of being one. And Bill was the only person who seemed to care about Georgie missing. Both of them were fighting battles that no one truly understood, not even their friends.

Henry sighed and his body seemed to lose some of its tension. He ran a bloodied and bruised hand through his hair and looked away from Bill.

"I'm sorry. About your brother, I mean," Henry told Bill, sounding exhausted.

"Thanks," Bill said. "I w-wish I could h-help you with you d-d-dad."

"No one can help me with him," said Henry. "I'm stuck with him until I can get out of this town. My home is my own personal hell."

"M-mine too," Bill mumbled softly, more to himself than Henry. Admitting it out loud made it feel even more real than it already was.

Again, they stared at each other and a silent understanding passed between them. Neither of them were happy and they didn't have a place that really felt like home. No one really understood them, not until now. They understood each other and neither of them had expected that. It was an odd feeling, having something in common with the bully that tormented him relentlessly, but maybe Bill had pegged Henry all wrong. Maybe the only reason why he was such a jerk was because of his home life. Perhaps all Henry needed was someone who understood him.

"If...if you ever n-n-need anything...any h-help..." Bill trailed off. Henry didn't seem like the kind of guy to admit when he needed help or anything like that. He definitely seemed like the type to suffer in silence. Yet Bill still offered to help if he could. Not that he would know how to help Henry with his situation anyway.

"If...if you need s-s-someone to t-talk to," Bill finished. "I'll l-listen."

Henry scrutinized him for a while. Bill shifted, feeling uncomfortable. Those smoldering eyes seemed to be staring into his very soul. That made Bill feel something he hadn't felt before and he wasn't sure if it was good or bad. After all, Henry was still a bully. Should Bill feel anything for him aside from fear and anger? He definitely wasn't afraid or angry at Henry right now. Actually, he felt sorry for him and he even wanted to give him a hug. Was that normal?

Voices shouting from the road on top of the slope that lead down to the stream broke Bill out of his trance. Henry looked around for a moment before he pocketed the tissues.

"Thanks, Bill. I'll see you around, I guess," Henry said a bit awkwardly before he delved into the woods on the other side of the stream.

He had just disappeared completely from view when Eddie, Richie, and Stan appeared, all of them talking loudly about something that didn't really hold Bill's interest. It wasn't their fault, though; his thoughts were preoccupied with Henry and their conversation.

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More often than not recently, Bill had been having run-ins with Henry Bowers and none of them were unpleasant. As a matter of fact, Henry had been downright nice to him. Giving Bill a free pass from getting the shit beat out of him for the school year, returning his coat to him during lunch when Bill had left it in the bathroom, and their run in near the Barrens were all out of the norm for the older boy. And it hadn't stopped.

Henry would at times give him subtle nods and waves at school or when they saw each other in town. When his friends were with him, Henry wouldn't do that, but his eyes would always tell Bill a different story. Not only that, but Henry hadn't been tormenting Eddie, Richie, and Stan nearly as much as he usually did. Oh, he still made his snide and nasty remarks, but Henry and his gang had been focusing their efforts on other kids at school and Bill had a feeling it was because he and Henry were kind of on good ground now.

And Bill found himself thinking of Henry in a different light, even to the extent that he would openly tell his friends that maybe Henry wasn't a complete jackass since he was being nice to him. Richie and Eddie stood firm on their opinions of him, but Stan kind of understood Bill's perspective. After all, it hadn't gone unnoticed by the others that Henry was pretty much leaving them alone for the time being.

But Bill had a bit of a problem.

It had been a long while since he had last had any 'alone time' with Henry. They hadn't really had the chance to talk, just the two of them, since their last conversation. That bothered Bill for some reason. And the fact that Bill found himself kind of missing Henry in a sense also bothered him. He shouldn't be missing Henry Bowers!

Yet he did.

Bill wanted to talk to him more because talking to Henry made him feel like he wasn't alone. Henry understood how he felt. Yes, Eddie, Richie, and Stan were his friends, but none of them knew what it was like to lose someone they loved, to be the only person determined to

find them, to live in a home that felt more like a prison than a home. Even if Bill told them how he felt now that Georgie was gone, would they truly understand? They were already helping him out by looking around the Barrens and being willing to go on the insane searches that no one else wanted to go on.

Maybe it was time that Bill told them everything. But he was hesitant to do so and he couldn't really explain why. For once, Bill wasn't sure how to put how he was feeling into words. At least with Henry, he didn't really have to because Henry already knew what he was feeling. Having someone around who already knew what kind of hell he was living in was a massive relief for Bill.

And it wasn't one that he received often enough.

Truthfully, it was only that one conversation by the stream that had made Bill feel as though he wasn't alone anymore. The way he had felt after that, knowing that there was someone else out there who knew how he felt, had been indescribable. For once, he felt like himself, before Georgie had disappeared. Bill wanted that again more than anything right now. He needed someone to ground him, bring him back from the hopelessness and despair that threatened to consume him every single day.

That was why Bill decided to do an utterly insane thing one day while at school.

While in class, happened to look out of the small window in the door and he saw Henry walking in the hall, maybe towards the bathroom? Bill's heart began to beat rapidly and he asked the teacher if he could go to the bathroom, giving some half-hearted excuse as to why he had to go. Whether or not the teacher believed him didn't matter as he was given permission to use the hall pass and go. Bill practically bolted out of his chair and grabbed the damn thing.

Bill made his way towards the closest bathroom and entered it. Standing there at the sink with a wad of wet paper towels in his hand was Henry Bowers. He had been gently dabbing his bruised eye and looked up when he heard Bill enter the bathroom. Henry didn't have time to say anything because Bill approached him fast and determined.

"Th-there you are," Bill said.

"What do you want, Bill?" Henry asked. "Can't you see I'm busy cleaning up my dad's mess?"

"I can, but I n-n-needed to s-see you," Bill told him. Henry looked at him, eyes clouded with both suspicion and happiness? Was that happiness?

"And why is that?" Henry asked, the ghost of a smile threatening to spread across his face.

"Y-y-y-you ma-make me feel..." Bill trailed off. He would sound crazy if he just blurted everything out in one go. Well, he had come here specifically to see Henry so Bill figured that he had already passed the point of insanity.

"Feel....?" Henry prodded, his lips quirking into that smile. Bill had to admit that Henry looked better when he smiled instead of smirked. It made him look...approachable. Even kind.

"F-f-f-feel...r-r-r-" Bill couldn't finish what he was about to say. He couldn't force the words past his mouth. His stutter was out of control just like his beating heart, which was pounding in his chest.

"Shut up, Bill," Henry said and in the blink of an eye, they were kissing.

It was a chaste kiss, no tongue seeking entrance to his mouth of anything like that. Only soft lips caressing his own and all of the anxiety and stress that had been plaguing Bill started melting away. He closed his eyes and shyly returned Henry's kiss, putting all of his feeling into it, trying to relay to Henry how much just being around him lately was helping him.

Bill seemed to be getting his point across because Henry straightened up and pressed closer to Bill's smaller frame. His body heat seeped into Bill and he found himself trying to get closer. Both of Bill's hands were trapped between Henry's body and his own and he could feel the older boy's heart beat beneath his fingertips.

He hoped that Henry knew what Bill was trying to tell him: that he

was glad that they had started talking; that he felt so much better knowing that someone understood what he was going through; that he appreciated Henry being kind to him more than he could say. And Bill hoped that Henry knew that Bill didn't want whatever it was that was happening between them to end. If anything, he wanted more, much more.

But all too soon, Henry pulled away from him and pressed their foreheads together. His eyes were closed, but agony was written clearly on his face. Bill felt his heart sink as reality set back in. He knew what Henry was going to say; it was what he should say. After all, they couldn't exactly go from being enemies to lovers. Not in Derry, not with Henry's friends being who they were and Bill's friends being who they were. Even if Bill's friends could accept that Bill might not be entirely into girls, there was little chance that they would accept Henry as his boyfriend.

"We...can never do that again," Henry told him, his voice soft and full of sorrow and regret.

"I know," said Bill, his voice barely above a whisper. Just like that, his world was crashing back down around him and everything was returning to the way it was.

"I wish things could be different," Henry said backing away from Bill. "It wouldn't work anyway."

"Yeah," was all Bill could think of to say. He wanted to believe that if they were given a proper chance, it could work. But at present, he just couldn't.

Derry wasn't an accepting town. Even if it was, Henry's dad would probably kill him if he found out his only child was gay. And Bill's parents would freak out too. They wouldn't kill him, but they would be acting even worse than they already were.

Besides, was there anything of real substance between them? They shared a similar kind of hell and that was it, wasn't it? Could there be anything else that they could bond over? Bill didn't know and he probably never would. Not that it mattered anyway.

"I'll see you around, Bill," Henry said after throwing his wad of paper towels away.

"S-s-see you, Henry," Bill muttered. He felt like he might cry. Actually, he wanted to cry, but he couldn't.

"You've still got a free pass by me," Henry added in an attempt to reassure Bill.

All Bill did was nod. He listened as the bathroom door opened and then closed, Henry's footsteps getting farther and farther away from him.

Just like that, he was alone again, with the only person who really, truly understood him growing more distant. How long Bill stood there in the bathroom, he didn't know, but eventually he, too, left and returned to the classroom. As the day wore on, Bill decided to redouble his efforts in finding Georgie no matter what the cost was. It's not like he had anything else to lose, right?